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MARLOW AND SANDHURST, HALF A CENTURY AGO.

IN TWO CHAPTERS—CHAPTER I.

I HAVE often met, of late, with newspaper paragraphs about Sandhurst, which read unpleasantly to me, because I have a great regard for the old place. What amount of truth there may be in them, I have no means of knowing, or who is to blame; but well I know what the Military College used to be—more than half a century ago—and I should like to tell.

My first acquaintance with it was made while yet an Eton boy. Somebody came in and said: 'There's a lot of fellows in red down my Dame's Lane; they seem to be hiding in the ditch.' Now, it was war-time, and we were threatened with invasion; but the French could never have got so far as Eton without our knowledge, and red was the right colour—the national one. Curiosity prevailed; we went out and brought these red men to a parley. They proved to be a party of cadets who had run away from Marlow, didn't know what to do next, and were reconnoitring. Tired and hungry the boys were; and we boys welcomed them and sympathised with their grievances, though I quite forget now what they were. We fed them, and comforted them, and sent them on their way—not rejoicing, for they had twelve long miles to walk back—and began to suspect they had been making fools of themselves; of which they would soon be certified.

Not long after this, my father said to me: 'Boy, wouldn't you like to go into the army?' As soon as I could get my breath, I answered, in the bravest tone I could assume: 'O yes, sir.' Alfieri won my heart by saying, as he does in his Autobiography, not that he never told a lie, but that he was less a liar than most of his acquaintances. That high character, I claim; and yet, on this occasion, I hardly spoke truth. I told the fib in utter terror—under the conviction that go I must, and had better do it with a good grace. So it was settled on the spot; and in due time my father handed me over to the authorities at Marlow. It was the monthly

examination for admittance; but on this occasion there was, besides myself, only one candidate—a sharp, black, little fellow. A man produced two very large slates, wrote a row of figures all along the top of one, and a row under them; then he told me: 'Multiply these, and prove your work by division on the other side.' Next he did the same for little blackee. I looked at my work; I knew how to do it; but it was so long that I might go astray and get bewildered in a forest of figures. I resolved, first, not to be frightened, and next, not to be in a hurry. Steadily I started, steadily I progressed, and was just beginning to think I should do in time, when, happening to look at my companion, I saw he had nearly filled both sides of his slate. 'Hullo!' I said, 'you get along fast.' 'Always do,' he answered, very short. 'Does it come right?' I asked, rather anxiously. 'Can't I make it, you fool?' says he. So he did, and took it up boldly. The examiner just looked to the end, saw that it fitted, and passed him. By and by, I brought up my slate; I had looked it carefully over, and knew there was not a wrong figure; but I did not get so much credit as the impudent monkey who had played such a trick, but taken so little time about it. He was a saucy one. Some time after, he fell dangerously ill. The college chaplain was sent to prepare him for death, but it was Mother Hubbard's case over again. 'When he got there, the dog was a-laughin'.' I know not what became of him: he should have made a successful soldier.

I was afterwards witness to a very different examination-scene at Sandhurst. The candidates were at work in the Board-room, the parents below, awaiting the result. Just before the Guard-room, in the midst of the lounging cadets, paced to and fro a hard-featured, widowed Minerva, of mature age. A little boy came down to her from his trial, and whimpered 'Spun!' (plucked). The only answer was such a box on the ear as sent him reeling among us, and away stalked the goddess.

I was admitted—a Marlow cadet—subject to military discipline. I moved by tap of drum. After a supper of unlimited bread and cheese and

bad beer, followed by prayers (witty ones, if brevity be the soul of wit), we marched off to bed. And now began my first soldier-like trouble. It was the practice to close the files to the utmost. You touched the one before you, and were touched by the one in the rear. Motion in this order was called the 'lock-step,' and having been brought from Prussia, was thought very fine; but, to execute it, you must move your foot in exact time with your leader, and plant it in the exact spot he had just left free. This, to a beginner, was simply impossible. If words and deeds corresponded, cadets, in answer to the question of the Catechism, 'What is your duty towards your neighbour?' should have said: 'To kick his heels when he doesn't keep step.' This duty they zealously performed, and, it must be owned, the success of this method of teaching the lock-step is almost miraculous. The only objection is its tendency to produce a sort of rawness about the heels and ankles of your juvenile neighbour. The leathern stock had a similar effect, at first, on the angles of his jaws. I had only to be kicked across the street; but one company slept at the very opposite end of Marlow, and this march had to be performed night and morning, in all weathers. It was done as a matter of course, and nobody was the worse for it. I was in the twenty-bedded room, quite full, and close packed. After a very short time allowed for undressing,* a sergeant took away the lights, and then began the row. A large dinner-party is apt to break up into little coteries, more or less pleasant; so did this large sleeping-party. And for their employments: well, I have not Milton by me; so I must refer you, at a venture, to his description of Pandemonium. I recollect, 'Some, apart, sate on a hill retired,' &c. For hill, read bow-window, and these were the great devils—lofty spirits—musing on war, and talking Spain. Taking advantage of the darkness, I slipped into bed; but my sleep (for I slept, in spite of all) was full of perils. Toe-ing and launching were always going on. I know not if modern refinement has substituted other entertainments. A band of little assassins would creep to the foot of a bed whose occupant was asleep, quietly turn up the clothes at the foot, pass a whip-cord noose round the great toe, carry off the line to a distance, and haul away till they pulled the victim out of bed. Launching was of various sorts, but what (in analogy with that other boyish torture, the Double Rule of Three) may be called the Double Rule of Launching, was thus performed. Two detachments would lay hold of the outer sides of two adjoining beds (we slept on very light X bedsteads, very close together), shoot the sleepers into the space between, throw over on them, first beds, then bedsteads, finally themselves jump on the top of the pile, and execute a war-dance. I can only compare this

* There was a military brevity about the toilet, but actual cleanliness was rigidly enforced by the boys themselves. At Sandhurst, a confirmed case of insufficient washing was treated by a public ducking in the water-supply where we filled our jugs. The size of the tap, and the powerful pressure, made this a severe punishment; but the ducking was a trifle to the disgrace. It was very rarely incurred. The contempt of effeminacy was as strongly marked as the respect for cleanliness. I will give an exception to prove the rule. A great lubber did once attempt to teach his fellow-soldiers dancing, and before he was found out, had actually enticed four pupils to learn quadrilles, then quite new things. He lived to be a general.

infernal proceeding to that of the Indian Begum who buried her rival alive under her own bed, that she might have the pleasure of listening to her groans.

These were civil disturbances; but we had our foreign wars besides. A spy might come in, announcing that the fifteen-bedded room were going to make an attack to-night. This was the room immediately under us. Though inferior in number, our enemies were superior in age and strength, and generally got the victory. But between the two was a little passage-room which held only three beds. The unfortunate dwellers in them had no peace; whichever side attacked, this was sure to be the seat of war; the confined space made the fighting more severe, and the unfortunate three got it on both sides. All this time there was a sergeant sleeping on the premises—sleeping—and he, good, easy man, had no more idea of leaving his comfortable bed to keep the peace among us than had his good wife beside him. Well, bruises nobody cared about, and nothing worse came of this rough play, to which use (what will it not do?) pretty soon reconciled me. There had been, indeed, some little time ago, a fatal case of bolstering, and bolstering was accordingly prohibited, on pain of expulsion; but the devil lost little by that prohibition. It was the depth of winter. The drum did not, indeed, as at Linden, 'beat at dead of night,' but before daylight it did. One of our twenty had a monomania for drumming; he would turn out in the dark, a quarter of an hour before the time, slip down, and pay the drummer to let him beat the *reveille*. The morning march and prayers followed in due course; and then came breakfast—bread and milk, good and abundant.

The college buildings, ill-suited to this magnificent age, did sufficiently well for us. We slept in three old hired houses, in different parts of the town. A fourth, with a large field in which temporary wooden buildings had been put up, as wanted, served for meals and studies, hospital, chapel, and house of correction for the whole college—consisting of nearly three hundred boys between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. In our own opinion, at least, we were rather soldiers than school-boys. There was no fagging. I had, to be sure, to clean my accoutrements, and to black my shoes—my own, but no one else's. I had no master, in the Eton sense. Save military discipline, and decent obedience to teachers, I was free. No flogging. At first, there had been an attempt to introduce this. The result was nothing less than a gunpowder-plot—discovered only just in time. No more ammunition was issued to such formidable soldiers. Their flints were removed, and the leaders expelled. To them, it was probably ruin, as far as the military profession was concerned. But their patriotism was soon forgotten, by those who reaped the reward of it, for flogging was abolished. No bullying—that is, no system of bullying; and any really bad case was likely to be summarily dealt with by lynch-law. I have known an offender of this description dragged through the deep mud of the college pond—rolled in it till he looked only fit for the Humane Society, and then universally shunned—the matter being never noticed by the authorities. Yet one case I do remember in which bullying was rewarded. At the bathing-place, a big fellow had just landed, and was standing on

the bank. With the caprice of a tyrant, he called to a little boy: 'I say, you, sir, swim across the hole.' 'I can't swim well enough; I'm afraid.' 'If you don't do it directly, I'll lick you well.' This threat sent the little fellow on. But just in the deepest part, nervousness or fatigue disabled him, and he was sinking. The only swimmer present was the bully, who swam well. Finding the matter serious, he just jumped in, and pulled the other ashore. Among us, the story circulated as a great shame, and a narrow escape. But a very different version must have been carried to the higher powers—by whom, I know not. Next Sunday, on parade, we were astounded. It was usual for the governor to inspect the ranks on a Sunday, and to take the opportunity of saying anything to which he might wish to draw general attention. Stopping before the bully, Sir A. Hope addressed him in the most flattering language, called on us all to admire his noble conduct in saving his little comrade's life at the risk of his own; and informed him that it had been reported to the Horse Guards, and that the next *Gazette* would contain his reward in the shape of an ensign's commission. He listened to all this in silence that might have passed for modesty; but he did not blush. We all listened in silent indignation. The matter was talked over after parade. His parents were known to be very poor. Independent of the college, they had no means of providing for him. He had nearly completed his allotted time there, but had proved so idle and stupid, that it was most unlikely he would ever pass the requisite examination for a commission. Under these circumstances, it was determined to say nothing. He was duly gazetted; and I have met him, an officer in the army.

The college had been originally founded as a charitable provision for the orphans of officers, to be maintained and educated free of expense; and after passing an examination, to be presented with commissions. Gradually, these limits were passed. The children of living officers were admitted, on payment of a small sum proportioned to their rank. Finally, civilians' sons were taken, paying one hundred pounds per annum. But among the parents—while I knew Sandhurst—were no civilians greater or richer than plain country gentlemen. No luxury, no extravagance, was permitted. The food, on the whole, plentiful and wholesome, was quite simple. We had a weekly allowance, varying with the age, from one shilling to two shillings and sixpence; and out of this was deducted any damage to furniture, under the fine name of Dilapidations (shortened to 'Dildaps'). Like all barrack damages I ever knew, they were excessive. Debt, beyond very trifling amounts, was unknown. One pound was the most any boy was allowed to bring to college with him, and any money known to be sent during the half-year was taken away. The old drummer-postman had a never-failing knack of detecting a bank-note in a letter, and, according to orders, took it up to the captain, who, on parade, called out the name on the address. The cadet would step forward, looking foolish. His letter was handed to him to open in public, and the enclosure taken possession of by the captain, and duly accounted for to the parent. So simple were we, that the easy dodges for evading this difficulty, which would occur to any modern boy of the meanest capacity, were inventions of later and degenerate days. Even dainties of any

kind brought in to meals were rigidly confiscated as soon as discovered. No fox ever had a sharper eye for an egg than my good old captain, Jack Otter.

I was too young to moralise on this state of things; I simply enjoyed it. The finery of Eton suited me ill. My dress was always shabbier than my neighbours', and the shabbiest part of my dress was my breeches pocket. Exposed to temptations in this condition, my morals were giving way. There are passages in this part of my life which I do not like to think of. In the healthier atmosphere of the Military College, honesty and manliness revived. Out of my small income, I could, and did, save; I paid, by instalments of a few shillings, little miserable Eton debts, and was thus relieved of a disagreeable load. As for my dress, I wore what every one about me did—the king's uniform (at that time a dress which every Englishman was proud of, and every foreigner respected; now-a-days, put off as soon as parade is over, as if it were a disgrace). If I wanted to be smarter than others, I had only to keep my dress cleaner. I went to drill, and, strange to say, I liked it. Plenty of grumblers it made. There was no pomp or circumstance about it—no firing, no music (we had one old drum for each company), no light movements. I wonder what I could find to like in it—except novelty. At dinner, we were in messes of ten. The head of the mess was indeed a potentate, and his patronage was much abused. I, a recruit, at the bottom, looked up to a fine leg of mutton, and waited patiently for my share. I might have waited till now. I got the bone, and was introduced to a dish of potatoes, and there was bread at discretion. Nobody minded me. But I was ogling a rice-pudding big enough for ten, and untouched. I inquired, timidly, if I might have a little. As much as I pleased, was the answer, with a contemptuous laugh. Oh, Fashion! the poet should have written thy name, not that of Happiness, when he spoke of 'our being's end and aim.' Here were a parcel of boys, with the rudest of appetites, and the humblest of fare; but Fashion had decreed that rice-pudding was vulgar, and not to be eaten; and they obeyed! I thanked my stars, and swallowed enough to plump up a sultana.

In games, Marlow was sadly deficient. One of the most popular was, I think, milking the captain's cows, which occupied the grass half of our playground. The rest was gravel—the Parade. But our bounds extended three miles from the college, including the town of Marlow, with which we had singularly little to do. Long runs (chevies) were carried to an extent that might have seemed making a toil of a pleasure, but was not so felt. Except for bathing purposes, we made no use of the Thames. I suppose we could not afford boating; but nobody seemed to miss it. Foot-ball was furious: I have known a leg broken by a fair straight kick. Fights, though hardly so frequent, were, I think, fiercer and more obstinate than at Eton. There were two very small champions, differing as a dwarf bulldog does from a Scotch terrier, continually going to law with their fists. When not fighting, they were bosom-friends. I have seen them both in hospital, after a general action, taking sweet counsel together, with the leeches hanging to both their black eyes. Study I began to see in a new light entirely. The serious studies of Eton had been cricket and rowing; as to the rest, the weary Greek and Latin, there was a general feeling,

understood and acted on, if not expressed, in that classical metropolis, 'What's the good of it all?' Then, from first to last, it was a sham. The half-dozen lines got by heart, at random, and instantly forgotten; just chewed, and spit out. The books taken into school for no purpose. Yourself put to the question about three times in a half-year—flogged, and done with. And then the trade in old copies—as shabby a one as that in old clothes. But at Marlow, there was reality and earnestness in the work, which was, moreover, in itself varied and interesting.

The bill of fare comprised French, German, and Mathematics, Modern History and Geography, Military Drawing and Fortification. And we worked with a will—with a purpose always before our eyes—a purpose which looked bright to youthful eyes—to get a commission—to join the glorious Peninsular army. Idleness there was—the exception, not the rule—and idlers, though not flogged, were looked after, and got little peace. Their best chance was to get into hospital, where was nothing to do—a charm which did attract some. Your friends would contrive to pay stolen, and therefore pleasant visits; to smuggle in 'pamphlets'—the equivalent for railway novels—and 'stickjaw' (cold plum-pudding, light and wholesome diet for invalids!). It was a sort of club, but, like the best clubs, admission was not easy. The surgeon had learned the truth, and hardened his heart. The most successful sham was rheumatism; it aches, and makes no sign. Moreover, if the savage of a doctor threatened to apply spiteful remedies, rheumatism could always take to flight, dive like a duck, turn like a hare, and reappear like a defeated French soldier. Mustard-plasters, hot and hot, and kept on till the patient roared, proved, however, in the end too much for rheumatism. I began to take my slate out of study, and work at it in the long winter evenings, which we had to ourselves. What would Mr Babbage have given for the power I then possessed, of calculating in the midst of a crowd of noisy boys! The evening amusements were mimic war—every room was in a state of siege. I was laughed at and badgered, but I was obstinate. At last I concluded a treaty. 'If you'll let me work in my corner, I'll join every storming-party as soon as it's really going on; and you'll let me alone again as soon as it's over.'

This bargain was fairly kept on both sides. After a time, my slate became a thing of course, and I had even imitators. The professors were, with few exceptions, admirable—some, indeed, too good for the work. It was a pity to see such mathematicians as Wallace and Ivory teaching vulgar fractions and Euclid's *Elements*. French and German were taught, and very well taught, by natives. The French were, I think, all refugee gentlemen—some of high family. The military staff consisted of governor and lieutenant-governor, major and adjutant, chaplain, and two surgeons; besides a captain and a sergeant to each company. One-half were superfluous. What a good fellow my captain was! Whoever remembers old Jack Otter, must be an old boy himself now; but the remembrance will do his heart good. Plain in feature as Socrates, shabby in dress, slouching, in those days of Prussian stiffness, roughish in manner, but with a twinkle of fun in the corner of his eye, and a wealth of honest, manly good-nature. Talk to him, and you found your companion was a perfect gentleman, and a well-informed one too. Age had

made him almost too easy for his duties, but we did not like him the worse for that.

Ah, where is the boy with whom, arm-in-arm, I once strutted up the High Street of Maidenhead! We had run over five miles, and were exhibiting our laced jackets to the admiration of young Maidenhead. Oh, Lucifer! how we did swagger! Suddenly, a voice, as from the clouds, struck us like forked lightning. It was only from the box of a stage-coach, on which sat Jack Otter. 'Hullo! young gentlemen, what are you doing here?' We stood, stared, and saluted, in solemn and guilty silence. 'Why, you'll be late for study.' (We meant to have cut it for once.) 'O no, sir; we'll try.' 'Nonsense; you can't do it; jump up behind.' And we did, speculating on our fate, as we drove homewards. Just coming into Marlow, the coach pulled up. Otter pointed to a footpath, a short-cut to college. 'Run away, boys,' he said. And we heard no more of the matter.

The kingdom of holidays (the school-boy's heaven) was at hand. We were to take our leave of Marlow, and heard wonders about the grandeur of the new college at Sandhurst. Orders came out to send in the 'parties.' You formed, as far as might be, parties of not less than three, going to the same neighbourhood; and chaises were ordered accordingly. The trunks containing our plain clothes were brought out of store; but it was a point of fashion for all who could to appear in a new suit. If I could only put on paper the vision now before my mind's eye—the vision of a home-ward-bound cadet half a century ago, it would be a sketch worthy of an antiquarian Punch. You should have overalls, gray cloth trousers, the inside of the legs of wash-leather, for riding, and ending in little buckets of shining patent-leather. Enormous curb-chains, to keep them down, were looped up in fustoons, when not on horseback; and large, sugar-loaf, metal buttons were sewn broadcast all over these overalls. But the point in which your taste and elegance were chiefly shewn—the test of your costume—were the under-waistcoats. Under a cloth one, I have seen as many as three of silk, and all of different colours, daintily peeping out, one within the other, and suggestive of circus-riding. Long dragon spurs, fixed to high iron heels, lent their aid to make a man (and a guy) of the boy, who only needed an eye-glass. I don't think there was such a thing in college.

Long before daylight on that December morning, crowds of chaises were at the doors of the old houses in Marlow. Lanterns gleaming, straw rustling, cords knotting, uncouth trunks lumbering down (the varieties of patent marvels in the portmanteau line were then unknown), and away we went—the principal detachment towards Maidenhead, the road to London. About three miles from Marlow, was a long common; this was our race-course—a real chariot-race. As was then usual, there were at least half-a-dozen tracks on each side of the road, over and among the deep rutts of which chaises were making furious play. The winning-post was a gate at the end of the common—a real post of danger. As we galloped through, I saw the gate-post was down, a chaise and horses in the ditch, three cadets sitting disconsolate on the bank, and a post-boy carried away insensible.

My party had chosen a circuitous route, for the sake of driving through Eton. On the trunks in front of the chaise, was a wicker black-bird

cage, containing a game-cock, the property of one of us. The bird was very quiet, and seemed to enjoy the thing as much as if he had been coming home from some Royal Ornithological College; but as soon as we came into Eton, he woke up, clapped his wings, beat his breast like a gorilla, crowed his loudest defiance, and never ceased. 'Long Walk' happened to be crowded. His salute was acknowledged with cheers; and our passage was a triumph.

Where are my two companions now? Dead long ago, I hope, for the last I heard of them was—one, a ruined gambler in India (oh, what a pity! he was such a good fellow); the other, copying for a law-stationer in London, to earn bread for a wife and children!

BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

CHAPTER XXXV.—EVIDENCE FOR THE PROSECUTION.

'THE first evidence which I shall bring before you,' said Mr Penning, 'is that of Jane Garrod—a woman of excellent character, and well known, I believe, to several persons present.'

Jane Garrod was accordingly called. As the servant who had ushered her into the room was going out, Lady Spencelaugh said: 'If Martha Winch is there, tell her to bring me my salts.' Once in the room, Mrs Winch took care not to leave it again. She sat down on a low stool behind Lady Spencelaugh, and was an attentive auditor of all that followed.

Jane courtesied respectfully to Lady Spencelaugh, and then to the assembled company; and then seated herself in the chair indicated by Mr Penning, a short distance from the table. She was a firm-nerved woman, and neither her manner, nor her voice when she spoke, betrayed the slightest discomposure. After a few preliminary questions from Mr Greenhough, she began her narrative as under:

'My name is Jane Garrod, and I shall have been married eighteen years come next Lady-day. My father was a small farmer a few miles from Normanford; but he was too poor to keep all his children at home, and when I was old enough, I had to go out to service; and a few years later, I was fortunate enough to be chosen as lady's-maid to Miss Honoria Barry of Dean's Manor—close to where my father lived. Miss Honoria was just seventeen at that time, which was my own age. She was as beautiful as she was good; and it was impossible for any one to be near her without loving her. She took a liking to me, and was very kind to me, and treated me more like a humble friend than a paid servant. Wherever she and her papa went, I went with them; and we travelled about a good deal at different times, both in England and abroad. Miss Honoria had many friends and acquaintances, as was but natural to one in her position; but the friend that she loved above all others was Miss Eveleen Denner. They had been school-girls together, and now they were more like sisters than anything else, and far more devoted to each other than many sisters that I have known. Well, it so fell out, one Christmas, when Miss Eveleen was staying at Dean's Manor, that among other guests invited there for the holidays came Sir Arthur Spencelaugh of Belair—at that time a major in the army, and his cousin, Captain Philip Spencelaugh; both over from India on leave of absence. They had not been twenty-four hours

at the Manor, before Sir Arthur was head over ears in love with Miss Honoria, and his cousin was as deeply smitten with the charms of Miss Eveleen. There were ardent lovers in those days; and before two months were over, the double wedding took place.

My dear Miss Honoria was now Lady Spencelaugh, but that made no difference in her treatment of me; she was just as kind to me as she had always been. We lived here at Belair for eight quiet happy months, and then both Sir Arthur and his cousin were ordered back to India, in consequence of some frontier war that had just broken out. Well, nothing would serve the ladies but that they must go with their husbands; and I, of course, must go with my dear mistress. When we reached Bombay, the war had been snuffed out, and our soldiers were ordered to an up-country station, and we, of course, went with them; and so three or four years passed quietly and pleasantly away, marked with nothing in my memory beyond an occasional removal to a fresh station. But, after a time, Captain Spencelaugh's lady was confined of a son; and a little while afterwards, my dear mistress brought her husband a sweet daughter—no other, in fact, than Miss Frederica here. We had just been celebrating baby's second birthday, when cholera of a very bad kind broke out at the station, and among its first victims were Sir Arthur Spencelaugh and his poor wife. They were well in the morning, and dead, both of them, at sunset; and they were buried under the walls of the fort at daybreak next morning. The last words my dear mistress said, and they were all she had strength to say, were: "Take care of baby;" and I promised her solemnly that, with Heaven's help, I would do so as far as in me lay. The captain's wife was away on a visit at the time, but the shock nearly killed her when she heard the news; and as her health had been delicate for some time, the captain (now Sir Philip Spencelaugh, the late baronet's only child being a daughter) determined at once to send her back to England, together with his own child, and his cousin's orphan girl. So we all went down to Bombay, and everything was got ready for the voyage. But misfortune still followed us; for on what was to have been the very last day of our stay, as Lady Spencelaugh was riding out, her horse shied suddenly, and threw her. Her leg was broken by the fall; and although everything was done for her that could be done, fever set in, and she was dead in less than a week. I thought for a time that Sir Philip would have gone crazy, but it takes a deal of grief to kill; and, besides, he had his little son to live for; so he got leave of absence, and we all came over to England together—the baronet, his son, little Miss Frederica, myself, and an ayah, or native nurse, who was in charge of the little motherless lad, with me to look after them both. This ayah, who was never any favourite of mine, was sent back to India a few months after our arrival, the climate of England being too cold for her. We came to Belair, and I and the children settled down here; but Sir Philip soon left us, and went to London, for his melancholy got the master of him in the country. At the end of about eighteen months, we heard that he was going to marry again; and presently he came down to Belair with his bride, the present Lady Spencelaugh. As it had happened after his first marriage, so it happened now: scarcely was the honeymoon over, when he was summoned back to India. This time,

he went alone. A short time after Sir Philip had left England, Miss Frederica's health became delicate, and the doctors recommended change of air; so we went to Pevsey Bay, she and I, and were away for about six months. This was two or three months after Mr Gaston was born. Lady Spencelaugh drove over every fortnight or so, to see how we were getting on, besides which, I had instructions to write to her Ladyship every few days, so that she might know how Miss Frederica's health was progressing. It was while we were staying at Pevsey Bay that news came to us of Master Arthur's illness and death; and I remember as if it was only yesterday, our mourning things being sent over by the Normanford carrier; and after we got back home, the first place Miss Frederica and I went to was Belair church, to see the marble tablet which had been put up to the memory of the dead child. I stayed with Miss Frederica a year or two longer, till she was taken out of my hands, and put under the care of a governess; and I was then free to marry, for I had been engaged many years, and Abel Garrod, my present husband that is, was getting tired of waiting.

'A very interesting piece of family history,' said Mr Greenhough testily, as Jane paused for a moment; 'but really, I don't see in what way it bears upon the case now under consideration.'

'Mrs Garrod, I believe, has not quite finished yet,' said Mr Penning drily.

Mr Greenhough shrugged his shoulders, glanced at his watch, and began to bite the end of his quill viciously.

'Captain Spencelaugh—that is, the late Sir Philip'—resumed Jane, 'on his visits to Dean's Manor, was sometimes accompanied by a younger brother, named Reginald, who had been brought up to be a barrister, but who afterwards went out to Canada, and died there a few years later. I saw Mr Reginald many different times, and had often occasion to speak to him, and have had presents from him, so that I could not possibly be mistaken as to his appearance. One evening last autumn, as I was walking through the waiting-room at Kingthorpe Station, I certainly thought that I saw his ghost before me. I was quite scared, so striking was the likeness between the man I saw before me and my late master's youngest brother. I never thought of asking who the stranger was, but set it down as a mere chance likeness, and forgot all about it after a few days; that is, I forgot all about it till I saw the stranger again. The next time I saw him was when he was brought to my door by the Kingthorpe carrier, who had found him lying wounded and insensible in the high-road. I recognised him again in an instant as the stranger I had seen for a moment one evening about two months before; but, gentlemen, I should quite fail in expressing to you what I felt when the doctor, on stripping the wounded man's shoulder to examine his hurt, pointed out to me a strange mark on that shoulder, exactly similar to the mark which I knew to have been on the shoulder of Master Arthur, who had died twenty years before: there it certainly was, line for line, as I so well remembered it.

I have already said that we brought an ayah with us from India, who had charge of Master Arthur, under me, and who was sent back home after a very short stay in England. This woman was passionately fond of the boy, and before she left Belair, while I was away for a few days

burying my mother, she contrived, by some means best known to herself, to mark him on the left shoulder with the figure of a coiled snake holding a lotos-flower in its mouth, done in faint blue lines, which nothing could ever rub out. I was sorely vexed when I got to know about it; and I scolded the woman rarely; but you see it was done, and couldn't be undone. I mentioned it privately to Lady Spencelaugh, but I never spoke of it to Sir Philip—I was afraid of his anger. Both the lotos and the snake, as you gentlemen are perhaps aware, are sacred symbols among the Hindus; and the ayah said the mark was a charm which would carry the child safely through many dangers, and that would bring him back to life when everybody thought he was dead. Of course, I set no store by her gibberish; but I must say, I was startled when I saw on the shoulder of Mr John English an exact counterpart of the mark which I knew to have been on the shoulder of Master Arthur Spencelaugh, dead twenty years before. And I think, gentlemen, that is all I have to say at present.'

'And quite enough, too,' muttered Mr Greenhough.

The vicar had been taking copious notes; and the baronet had tried to follow his example, but had got the tail of one sentence so inextricably mixed up with the beginning of another, that, after several vain efforts to make some sense of what he had already written, he gave up the task in despair. Said the lawyer to the vicar: 'You do not, I hope, my dear sir, attach much importance to the evidence of this woman?'

'Not much, certainly, as the case stands at present,' returned the vicar. 'Her evidence seems to rest on nothing stronger than one of those coincidences which are by no means so unfrequent in real life as some people imagine. Still, I believe Jane Garrod to be a strictly honest woman; one who would speak the truth conscientiously, as far as she knows it.'

'Just so—as far as she knows it,' said the lawyer drily. 'Half-truths are always dangerous things to handle.'

'Well, let us proceed a little further, and see what more we can elicit,' said the vicar. 'Who is your next witness, Mr Penning?'

'What I propose to do next,' said Mr Penning, 'is to read to you the evidence of one James Billings, formerly a footman at Belair, afterwards transported for burglary, and now just released from Portland, after serving out a second sentence.'

'Oh, ho!' said Mr Greenhough grimly. 'Pretty company you are introducing us to! I wonder what value any jury would attach to the evidence of such a double-dyed scoundrel. But why is not the fellow himself here?'

'I did not think it necessary to produce him in person on such an occasion as this,' said Mr Penning. 'I can, however, have him here for you by to-morrow morning, if you wish it. Meanwhile, I will, with your permission, read this statement, which has been drawn up by Billings himself without any assistance.'

'Pray proceed, sir,' said the vicar; whereupon Mr Penning read as under:

'According to promise made and given, I, James Billings, otherwise known as "Jim the Downy," now proceed to put down on paper some Recollections of my Early Life.

'To begin at the beginning. You know already

that I was footman at Belair, but you don't know how I came to fill that situation; and I must add a few words of explanation, so that you may understand better what follows. My father was a well-known begging-letter writer, which accounts for my education; and all my family were more or less mixed up with the profession. But my governor got lagged at last, and my two brothers came to grief in another way; and I got such a sickening of the whole business, that I determined to try what honesty would do towards making my fortune. Not to bother you with what you wouldn't care to hear about, I got a footman's place at last; and two or three years later, I went into the service of Lady Spencelaugh on her marriage; and so, in course of time, found myself at Belair. I liked a footman's life well enough for some things—there was no hard work to do, and plenty of time for reading the newspapers; but, on the other hand, I seemed as far as ever from making my fortune. It was about this time that I fell in with Nance Fennell, who was living with her mother at White Grange, and I used to go there to see her as often as I could find time.

'I ought to have told you that one of my sisters was married to Charley Wing, a noted cracksmen or housebreaker. Charley often professed to be sorry that I had taken to such a duffing way of getting a living; and said that a young fellow of my abilities, with proper instruction, might have done something splendid in his own line; and would often invite me to join him. One day Charley met me, and said: "Your people often go to Sedgeley Court, and you go with them." "Yes," said I. "Well," said he, "me and my pal, Bill Stuckley, have got a plant on there. There's no end of plate in the house; and just at this time of the year, while they are having so much company, the old dowager keeps all her diamonds at home. Now, I want you, next time you go there, to make me a careful plan of the house, and to ascertain all you can about the position and strength of the plate-chest; and if the crack comes off all right, you shall have a fair share of the swag, and then you can marry that girl that you are so sweet on, and hook it to Australia." I took the bait after a while, and agreed to do as he wanted. Perhaps Charley would have wanted to crack Belair, only he knew from me that while Sir Philip was away in India, all the family plate was kept at the banker's.

'At this time there was living at Belair, Lady Spencelaugh and her baby son; Master Arthur Spencelaugh, the baronet's son by his first marriage, a lad about five years old; and Miss Frederica Spencelaugh, the daughter of the last baronet, both of whose parents had died in India. After a time, Miss Frederica was sent away with her nurse to some sea-side place for the good of her health; and a few weeks after that, it was reported among us servants down stairs that Master Arthur was lying very ill up-stairs of some catching fever; and orders were given that nobody was to go near the room except the doctor, and the woman who had volunteered to nurse him. This woman was a Mrs Winch, the landlady of the *Hand and Dagger* at Normanford, and my Lady's confidante in everything (it seems they had known one another when girls); and everybody said it was very good of her to run the risk. The doctor who saw the boy was Mrs Winch's brother; his name was Kreefe—a lame, squint-eyed man, and not one of your swell

doctors by any means. Well, Master Arthur got worse and worse, and in a few days he died—at least we were told so; and so particular was Mrs Winch that nobody should run the risk of catching the fever but herself, that when the undertaker's men brought the coffin, she made them leave it outside the room, and said she would do the rest herself. So we were all put into black, and there was a quiet funeral one morning; and everybody thought they had seen the last of poor Master Arthur.

'On the second night after the funeral, I had an engagement to meet Crack Charley at twelve o'clock in the east plantation. We kept early hours at Belair; and at that time of night I was obliged to let myself out and in again unknown to anybody; but that wasn't difficult to manage. I had seen Charley, and was coming back along the gravelled path that runs round the east wing of the Hall, when what should I hear but a child's thin voice, that sounded close by me, but whether above or below, I couldn't tell, crying: "Help—help! Please ask them to let me out." I looked round, but could see nobody, and my blood ran cold all over me. I called out: "Who the d— are you? and what place do you want to be let out of?" "I am Master Arthur," said the child's voice, "and I have been shut up here ever such a long time. Oh, do please beg of them to let me out!" I swear you might have knocked me down with a sneeze when I heard these words. I had watched this lad's funeral only a few hours before, yet here he was, still alive, and speaking to me! With a good deal of bother, I made out where he was; and then I got one of the gardener's ladders, and planting it against the wall, which just there is thickly covered with ivy, I climbed up it, and so found the spot where the voice came from. It was a long narrow slit in the thick wall of what is the oldest part of the Hall, lighting a small room, which no doubt had often been used as a hiding-place in the old troubled times. This opening, as I afterwards found, was entirely hidden from the outside by a thick curtain of ivy. "Who shut you up here, Master Arthur?" I said, speaking to him through the slit in the wall. "My Lady, and that woman with the cat's eyes," he said—meaning Mrs Winch. "How long have you been here?" I asked. "I don't know how long, because I always feel so sleepy here; but a very long time," he said. "That's you, Billings, is it not? I know your voice. Will you please to shake hands with me?" I squeezed my hand into the slit as far as I could, and then I felt his cold little fingers grasp mine. "Thank you," he said, in his sweet, melancholy way, as he let go my hand again; and I had a very queer feeling round my heart for some minutes afterwards. I talked to him a little while longer; then he said: "I think I must get down now, Billings—I am standing on two chairs placed on the table—as I am getting very sleepy again, and I might fall, you know. You will ask them to let me out, will you not? Good-night, and God bless you, Billings!"

'On my soul, I don't like to put it down! but I betrayed my promise to that child, and never mentioned to any one what I had seen and heard. I have done many a rascally trick in my time, but that was the wickedest of them all. Instead of doing what I ought to have done, I said to myself: "My Lady has got a little private game of her own on here. If I can only make myself master of it, she will pay me well to keep

the secret." So I determined to keep my eyes open. I had not long to watch, for the very next night, about 11 P.M., a little covered cart, driven by Kreefe, came up to one of the side-doors; and presently Mrs Winch came out, carrying the child in her arms, fast asleep. She got into the cart with him; the cover was tied down, and the doctor drove off with his load. I heard them say something about White Grange, so I stole away by a near footpath across the moors, and was there, hidden in the thick thorn-tree that grows just inside the boundary-wall, when Kreefe drove up to the door. Old Job Sandysen came out with a lantern, and himself carried the lad, still asleep, into the house; and there he was hidden away for six weeks in one of the top rooms of White Grange. Nance Fennell told me all about it afterwards. At the end of that time, Mrs Winch and the doctor went one night to White Grange with the same little covered cart, and took the lad away; and as to what became of him afterwards, I know nothing, only Nance said that she happened to overhear that they were going to Liverpool. But I do happen to know that just at that very time Kreefe and his wife left Normanford; and it was given out that they had gone to America.

'Well, I thought after this that I had got a clear case against my Lady, such a one as ought to bring me in something handsome; and so it would have done, had not other things turned out badly. Sedgeley Court was safely cracked, and I got my share of the plunder; but unfortunately the police got hold of Bill Stuckley for it, and he peached when in prison; besides which, my plan of the house was found on him; so one fine morning, he and I and Charley had the pleasure of hearing that we were to be sent on our travels into foreign parts for several years to come. Before sailing, I sent a message to Lady Spencelaugh, telling her I wanted to see her on important business; but either she never got the message, or else she wouldn't come. But the secret was one that would keep, and I determined to keep it till I got back home. At the end of ten years, I found myself in the old country again, hard up. I had made up my mind that as soon as I got the means, I would run down to Belair, and pay my Lady a visit. Before I could do this, however, I fell in with an old friend of Charley's, and was persuaded to join him in a little affair, for which we both got into trouble; and the rest you know.

'And now you've got the whole boiling out of me; and my opinion is, that I'm a cursed fool for my pains. I ain't a superstitious cove, but I can't help thinking that if I had acted square by the lad, as I promised him, things might have gone more square with me. But, what can't be cured must be endured. One thing I do know—that writing is deuced dry work; so, now that this job is well out of hand, I'm dead nuts on to a tumbler of old rum, and a pipe of choice negro-head.—Yours to command,

JIM BILLINGS."

'P.S.—I haven't bothered you with any dates in my letter, but I can give you them all as pat as ninepence, whenever you may want them.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.—MR PENNING'S PROPOSITION.

'A very characteristic production!' said Mr Greenhough, as Mr Penning finished reading the ex-convict's statement. 'Mr James Billings's old skill as a begging-letter impostor has stood him in

good stead in that ingenious piece of composition. Faugh! The whole narrative is redolent of the Old Bailey!'

The baronet chuckled, and then instantly became grave again, as though he had been caught in some dereliction of duty. The vicar, too, looked very grave, and was conning his notes seriously. Mr Greenhough had a strong opinion of the vicar's clear good sense, and he felt vaguely uneasy at the expression of that gentleman's face; for the lawyer himself was quite serious in believing that the whole affair was nothing more than an ingenious conspiracy got up to defraud the rightful heir.

Lady Spencelaugh said no word, but sat quite still, with one hand clasped in that of her faithful friend, Martha Winch; and with her eyes bent mostly on Gaston—that son for whose sake she had risked so much. Gaston himself sat biting his nails moodily. The olive of his cheek had paled somewhat during the last half hour. Title, houses, and lands seemed to be slipping from under his feet in some incomprehensible way, just at the moment when he had begun to realise them as being all his own. If he were not Sir Gaston Spencelaugh, the richest baronet in all Monksshire, what would become of him, by Jove! with that threatening array of bills, and duns, and post-obits hemming him in, and stopping up every avenue of escape; and ready to swoop down upon him the moment his misfortune should get wind, and crush him remorselessly, as by the *peine forte et dure*? He would shoot himself; by Jove! that's what he would do—it was the most gentlemanly mode of writing Finis to one's Memoirs—and give them all the slip that way.

'What further evidence have you to offer in support of this extraordinary charge?' said the vicar at last, breaking a silence that was becoming oppressive to every one.

The next evidence put in by Mr Penning was that of Margaret Fennell, at present a resident in Grellier's Almshouses; who deposed, that in a certain month of a certain year, Martha Winch, and her brother, Jeremiah Kreefe, took to the house known as White Grange a boy, apparently about five years of age; which child, after being kept locked up in the said White Grange for the space of six weeks, was taken away one evening after dark by the two before-named persons, and never seen by her, Margaret Fennell, afterwards.

Mr Penning next brought forward the evidence of Mr Edwin, ex-master of the Foundation School at Normanford; who deposed to having been at Liverpool on a certain day of a certain year, and to there seeing Dr Kreefe, his wife, and Mrs Winch, accompanied by a boy, apparently about five years old, alight from a cab at one of the docks. Mr Edwin further deposed to seeing Mrs Winch bid farewell to her brother and his wife; and to seeing the two latter, accompanied by the child, go on board a vessel named the *Lone Star*, which vessel, as he found from after-inquiry, was advertised to sail for New York at high-water that very day.

The next piece of evidence put in by Mr Penning was the Statement written by John English at Pevsey Bay, and sent by him to Miss Spencelaugh. Mr Penning read this Statement aloud, as he had done the previous evidence. In it, as may be remembered, John English spoke of his early life in America with the Kreefes; and how the lame doctor had at last contrived to get rid of him. He mentioned his recognition of the doctor's portrait

at the *Hand and Dagger*; and how he became acquainted with the contents of the note intended for Lady Spencelaugh; and of his sudden dismissal from Belair the day after Mrs Winch's return to Normanford; together with various other minor matters, some of which had been brought out more strongly in the previous evidence, but all tending to establish the truth of his story.

'This concludes our case as it stands at present,' said Mr Penning as he refolded John's manuscript.

'In the absence of Mr English, as I must still continue to call him,' said the vicar, 'I really don't see what further steps can possibly be taken in this matter. But perhaps Lady Spencelaugh may have something to say to all this?'

Mr Greenhough was whispering earnestly with my Lady and Mrs Winch, and presently he came forward, and addressing the vicar and the baronet, said: 'Lady Spencelaugh desires me to deny most emphatically the truth of the allegations contained in the statements just read to you by Mr Penning, so far as they affect her Ladyship. The evidence of the convict Billings she states to be without the shadow of a foundation in fact—at least that portion of it which relates to the late Master Arthur Spencelaugh: whether the rest of it be true or false, is a matter of no moment. Mrs Winch, the respected landlady of the *Hand and Dagger*, is quite willing to admit that there was a child taken to White Grange by herself and brother, and that the same child was afterwards taken by Dr Kreefe to America; but that the child in question was Master Arthur Spencelaugh, she most positively denies. At the proper time and place, Mrs Winch will be prepared to prove who the child really was, and explain why it was found necessary to get him out of the country in such a surreptitious manner. For the rest, until this Mr English turns up, and proves his own case more completely, and to better purpose, than his advocates have done for him, we shall sit down contented with the nine points of the law which we have in our favour. We don't think that this Mr English ever will turn up in this neighbourhood again. We believe him to have been wise in his generation, and to have "made tracks," as the Yankees say. Should he, however, have the rare impudence ever to shew his face in this part of the country again, we are quite prepared to have him arrested as a common impostor. Six months' oakum-picking would, I opine, go far towards checking his ambitious proclivities for the future. I may add that Lady Spencelaugh cannot but feel intensely grieved that any one for whom she has felt so warm an affection as she has for Miss Spencelaugh, should have taken a course so unwarranted, so opposed to sense and good-feeling.' Here Mr Greenhough caught the vicar's eye fixed on him, and there was something in it which told him he had better stop. 'But the subject is a painful one, and I refrain from adding more,' he said, and then sat down.

Mr Penning rose. 'We are not here to bandy accusations,' he said, 'but to set right, as far as in us lies, a great apparent wrong. As stated by me before, I am quite at a loss how to account for the absence of Mr English; but I have no doubt that when that gentleman does return, he will be able to furnish a satisfactory explanation of what at present seems so inexplicable. It is easy to call any man an impostor; but in the present case the term is a simple absurdity, as no one knows better

than Mr Greenhough himself. The facts which have been laid before you to-day having come to Miss Spencelaugh's knowledge, too late, I am sorry to say, for Sir Philip to be made acquainted with them, Miss Spencelaugh felt that this occasion, more than any other, was the one on which she ought to relieve herself of a responsibility which she was no longer prepared to carry alone. On you, reverend sir, and on your colleague, as executors under the will of the late lamented head of this family, that responsibility must now devolve; and in the absence of the person chiefly concerned, it will rest with you to decide, from what you have heard, as to what steps, if any, you may deem it requisite to take in the present contingency. Whatever decision you may arrive at, Miss Spencelaugh will abide by; but to say, as my legal friend has said, that the lady in question ought to have kept back the evidence which you have heard this morning, is equivalent to saying that she ought to have made herself accessory after the fact to what, if our case be a genuine one, is one of the most base and cruel conspiracies that ever came within the range of my experience. I say this without the slightest imputation on any person or persons here present. We can, however, go one step further in this extraordinary business, and one only; but that step, if you are willing to sanction it, may prove a most important one in testing the value of the evidence which has been brought before you to-day—that evidence which my legal friend has denounced as a wholesale piece of imposture. Gentlemen, we can open the coffin which is said to contain the body of Master Arthur Spencelaugh.'

At these ominous words, a low cry of agony burst irrepressibly from the lips of Lady Spencelaugh, and a deathlike whiteness overspread her face. Gaston, thinking she was going to faint, sprang to her side; but she waved him impatiently away, and straightened herself presently, and summoned back a little colour to her cheeks, as though she were afraid lest any one should see how powerfully Mr Penning's last words had affected her. They had taken every one in the room by surprise. Mr Greenhough was fairly puzzled. His scepticism was beginning to be shaken in spite of himself. Up to this moment, he had really looked upon the whole affair as a cleverly concocted conspiracy; but his observant eye had not failed to note Lady Spencelaugh's evident agitation; and the audacity of Mr Penning's proposition almost took his breath away.

Mr Penning resumed. 'You, Sir Michael, are, I believe, a county magistrate; and, unless I mistake, you, reverend sir, are vicar of the parish in which the church of Belair is situate; besides which, the family vault is private property; and, as the executors of the late baronet, you have, I opine, full power in that capacity to act as I have indicated, should you think well to do so.'

'Really, Mr Penning,' said the vicar, 'this proposition of yours is a most extraordinary one, and one on which I and my colleague are not prepared to decide without some consideration. But, in any case, we certainly could not think of proceeding in such a matter without the concurrence of Sir Gaston Spencelaugh, whom, notwithstanding all that has been said this morning, I must still consider as the head of the family, and the owner of Belair.'

'It would be rank sacrilege!' exclaimed Lady Spencelaugh, addressing herself to the company

for the first time that day. All present were struck by the change in her voice, ordinarily so low, honeyed, and courteous, now so husky, and with an ill-concealed anxiety in its tones.—'Gaston, my dear boy, you must not allow this thing to take place. Your father's bones will rise up in judgment against you if you do! No—no—for my sake, you must not allow it!'

'What have we to fear, mother?' said Gaston, his pale olive face looking more haggard than ever, and his under-lip twitching nervously as he spoke. 'You have already stated, or rather Mr Greenhough has for you, that the evidence we have heard this morning is a tissue of falsehoods, as far as you are concerned. Do you still adhere to that assertion?'

'I do, I do!' said the miserable woman eagerly. 'All lies, Gaston dear, as far as I am concerned.'

'In that case, mother, we have nothing to be afraid of,' said Gaston. 'To open my poor brother's coffin, under such circumstances, cannot be any sacrilege.—Gentlemen,' he added, coming forward to the table, 'whatever permission you require from me in this case, I grant freely and fully. Act as seems best to your own judgment. For my mother and myself, I state emphatically that instead of shunning inquiry, we court it. Let your perquisition be as searching as possible; we have no fear of the result.'

'But Gaston, Gaston,' implored Lady Spence-lagh in a tone of agony, 'I tell you this must not be allowed! Oh, it is horrible! For my sake, Gaston, you must not allow this!'

'Mother, in such a case as this it is necessary,' said Gaston firmly. 'The permission I have given I cannot retract. Besides, such a proof will go far to shew the utter worthlessness of this base scheme of imposture. Come; take my arm. For the present, our business here is at an end.'

She gave one look into his face, and then seeing that his resolve was not to be shaken, with a low, bitter sigh, she took his arm, and allowed herself to be led from the room, Mrs Winch following meekly.

After a long consultation with Sir Michael, the vicar announced that Mr Penning's proposition would be acceded to; and appointed the hour of six that evening as the time for the gentlemen there present to meet at the church.

To Frederica the day had seemed a long and terrible one. She thanked Heaven fervently that it was over at last, and that the weight of the dark secret which she had carried about with her for so long a time would rest on her feeble shoulders no more.

AUCTIONS.

THE famous proposal of Mr Thackeray's with regard to the utilisation, or (if that should be found impossible) the employment of our junior nobility by making them Auctioneers, has never been carried into effect. Several reasons have been advanced to account for this. Some have urged that these young aristocrats are too proud to turn an honest penny in a business-like way. They are not unwilling, it is whispered, to enter the ring and have transactions with Welchers; but they will not demean themselves by having anything to do with orthodox trade. They will marry a millionaire's daughter, though he may have made

his money by it; but they will not make any in the same legitimate manner for themselves. This explanation, however, is shrewdly suspected to emanate from the Radicals, who delight in proving persons of title to be illogical and inconsistent. If the *Rostrum* were fine old oak, and carved with the crest and motto of the young nobleman who filled it, and the ivory hammer surmounted with the similitude of his elder brother's coronet, we can fancy nothing more appropriate to high rank. Then, instead of an auctioneer, let us term him a Professor of the Art of Persuasion, and the calling would be among the professions at once. Our junior nobility have no objection, or, if they have, they manage to get over it, to fill a pulpit; and we all know that 'going, going, going' is what the clergyman is always preaching from that coigne of vantage. Nor, again, do they hesitate to join the bar. Now, I do not suppose that any one will have the hardihood to contend that an auctioneer is liable to be brought into worse company than a barrister, who, by the etiquette of the law, is forbidden to open his mouth except at the personal instigation of an attorney.

How these miserable prejudices of society crumble into dust at the touch of the finger of common-sense!

The simple truth is, that the reason why our junior nobility are not provided for in the manner so hopefully suggested by the great satirist of the nineteenth century, is the same which prevents my rivaling Herr Joachim as the first-fiddle in Europe. They are altogether incompetent for such a calling. Is it supposed that an auctioneer has only to repeat his monotonous cry three times, and then strike a blow with his hammer? A cuckoo and a woodpecker could, in that case (if trained to act in unison), perform all he has to do. A man may be a sound divine, a popular physician, and even a good lawyer, without being many degrees removed from a fool in everything which does not relate to his own profession; but it is impossible that a successful auctioneer should be less than a sagacious man. There is perhaps no calling in which every sort of learning may be made so useful. To-day, he has to sell an estate, and it is his duty to descant upon territorial affairs; arable and pasture; rods and perches (taking care not to confound them with his 'rights of fishing'); drainage and irrigation; leasehold and copyhold. If there is a Mansion with it, opportunities are afforded for persuasive eloquence, which a parliamentary barrister might sigh for till his wig grew bald; and now he assures the Practical that the roof is in complete repair; and now he hints to the Parvenu that he has only to purchase that ancestral abode, to secure for himself a position in the County.

To-morrow, he has to sell a library, and all that he knows of books is called into requisition. There is no language, living or dead, which on such occasions may not be useful to him. The very titles of the 'lots' require something of knowledge, lest his pronunciation of them should bring a smile to the lips of some old bookworm, whose only notion of humour, perhaps, is a false quantity. Besides the books, there are very likely some Antiquities. Our Professor of the Art of Persuasion should have something germane to the matter to say about every one of them. He is not a Cheap Jack, selling fifth-rate crockery to clowns at a fair; mere words will avail him nothing—rather

the reverse, indeed; it behoves him to be an illustrator of his subject, not reiterating, like the Priest and the Advocate, but being 'the abstract and brief chronicle' of the matter in hand. Or again, our auctioneer has to sell Pictures: he should in that case be a man of taste, or, at all events, must understand something of the relative value of such wares. The same remark applies to Wine and Jewels. In short, there is no calling extant in which Knowledge of all kinds is so obviously Power, or Learning so truly 'excellent' (even when 'house and land' are *not* 'gone and spent'—a very depreciatory addition to the eulogy, by the by), as the profession of an auctioneer.

Various, however, as are the descriptions of goods with which he has to do, and the opportunities for judicious display which they afford him, the people with whom he deals are still more heterogeneous and diverse. They range, in the first place, naturally from the highest to the lowest. The dilettante duke peers scrutinisingly through his double eye-glass at the same article of *virtù* which the old curiosity-shop keeper regards so sceptically through his horn spectacles; nay, which the penniless tout, out of elbows and employment, but clinging to the shadowy hope of a 'commission,' surveys with lacklustre eyes. The auction-room is almost as great a leveller as the grave; although, with respect to these touts, they are not to be found in such numbers, nor do they conduct themselves with such audacity as at private sales. If you approach a house where the furniture is being disposed of by auction, you will find a crowd of these curious people about the door, each with a catalogue of the effects in his hand, and a pencil, the wood of which is as black and polished, as is the lead within. They chatter in a friendly manner with one another until you approach, when they at once become the most determined foes. Irish card-drivers, when they catch sight of a fare, behave somewhat similarly, but do not inspire such alarm. These run at you in a body, with frightful cries, demanding custom, and at the same time depreciating their rivals. When, however, you have elected one to be your bidder, they leave you at peace, and amity is at once restored among themselves. There is not the least necessity for you to do this; the superstition about dealers not permitting you to bid against them is in most cases absurd; but if you are nervous, or a lady, you must pay the penalty of your misfortune in a small percentage to this unattractive go-between.

There are few sadder spectacles than a sale of goods by auction in a house where you have been a frequent guest, if at least, as usual, there is some peremptory necessity for the occurrence. Sad to see the once prized trinkets in irreverent hands, and gazed upon by eyes that only estimate their money value; harsh sound the tones of the auctioneer, he be distributes with each fatal blow the objects so familiar to us among the greedy crowd; his hammer strikes upon our shrinking ears like the knell of doom. Something of this unpleasant feeling always seems to me to hang about sales in private houses, even though neither death nor unlooked-for poverty may have invoked the presence of the auctioneer; but fortunately it is not everybody who is troubled with such sentimental weakness. There is a large class of moderately ancient, large-bodied females, for instance, who frequent all auctions in their neighbourhood with the same regularity with which they go to

church, or (as I fancy is more likely) to chapel. They investigate every article on the 'view'-days with microscopic intenceness, and upon the eventful morning come early, as to a gratuitous entertainment, in order to secure good seats: as every lot is sold, they carefully enter the price in their catalogues; and not until the last 'gone' has sounded, do they rise with important faces, and go home to tea. They have listened with all the interest and decorum which they evinced during a charity-sermon upon Sundays, but in neither case do they give way to impulse. They have not bid, nor did they ever intend to bid, one shilling. Not all the eloquence of Demosthenes, joined to the grace of an Admirable Crichton, could avail with them: but then it is always very difficult to extract money from the Gentler Sex. When the poet tells us that the proper study for mankind is Man, he seems to have had an eye to Auctioneering. The study of Woman, infinitely difficult as it is, would never prove remunerative in the Rostrum.

But even confining himself to the masculine portion of his audience (who, moreover, are as twenty to one when compared with the feminine), what a range of characters has this Professor of the Art of Persuasion to manipulate! What different treatment, to begin with, do the two vast classes who compose his hearers require: the dealer and the amateur, the Jew and the Gentle! For the one, he must have a gentlemanly address, conciliating manners, and a persuasive smile: for the other, a specious frankness, a ready, but not too subtle wit, good temper, and a decision not to be shaken by the loudest brawler. For both, he must possess the vigilant eye, that detects the half-formed wish of the possible purchaser, and the nimble tongue that straightway makes it blossom into a bid; he must be judicious, so as neither to hurry the bidding to the loss of his employer, nor to linger over it to the impatience of his hearers. It is his mission to watch the passion of emulation, and to flatter it to the height, but when that is done, to leave his victims to themselves, only glancing from one to the other, and interpreting their slightest gesture by a word. There is no oratory in the senate, nor in the law-courts, more capable of infection, more instinct with suggestion and meaning, than are the brief but eloquent glances of the auctioneer. He must not only be a judge of mankind in the general, but must be acquainted with them individually, at least as respects the dealer, otherwise he would never credit the fact, that the snuffy, dirty, shirt-collarless, nasal person who has just bid five hundred pounds for a sapphire may be relied upon to redeem his pledge, even if it had been for double the money.

The behaviour of these gentry is very peculiar: it is incidental perhaps to the fact of most of them keeping curiosity-shops, that they are not only curious in their own personal appearance, but in their dispositions: the vehemence with which they struggle with one another, in order to more closely investigate some article of *virtù*, reminds one of nothing so much as a swarm of minnows to whom you cast a morsel of bread, or a squad of ducks with a worm too large to be swallowed at a gulp, and which one gets hold of for a second, only to have it snatched from his bill by another. *Cracked*, cries one of these disappointed ones, who has not been able to use his microscope; *brass*, cries another, who has

found his touchstone equally unprofitable; and so they go on, snatching and depreciating, till we almost wonder that the Professor of the Art of Persuasion does not swoop down upon them in person from his eyrie, and 'conciliate' them (as Charles Lamb expresses it) with his ebony hammer. But even more necessary to the auctioneer than the intellectual endowments of which we have spoken, is the complete control of his temper. In the proprietor of the goods, which may be selling at prices below his own expectations, this is not to be expected; and since nobody *does* set the same value upon an article as its owner, an observant eye may generally detect the Proprietor in an auction-room. Again, the change that takes place in the countenance of the amateur bidder (for the dealer makes no sign) when the lot for which he has closely contended is knocked down to him, is pleasant to contemplate: a moment ago, he wore an air of studied carelessness, not to say of disparagement; but now he is triumphant, radiant. "It is nought, it is nought," saith the buyer; but when he has gone his way, then he boasteth.

The most curious sale by auction which has taken place of late in London—with the exception of the 'Fossil-man,' who did not fetch so much, by the by, as the price of a 'subject' in the old body-snatching times—was the disposal of the jewels and art-treasures which were 'looted' from the Imperial Summer Palace during the last Chinese war. They had been previously exhibited at the Crystal Palace as well as in Piccadilly, and were so far familiar to the public; but I could not help regretting that the Professor of the Art of Persuasion who sold them, and understood his business so remarkably well, did not also understand Chinese. Here was surely an example corroborative of what I have stated, that in this particular calling there is no species of knowledge which may not be found useful. In the case of those splendid salvers, for instance, half turquoise, half gold enamel, how was I to *know* that the centre represented the elements of nature, round which were circles containing the primitive Chinese characters, those of Lant-Chou and Confucius, the signs of the Zodiac, represented by fantastic figures, and bats, the emblem of long life and happiness? All this was worse than Greek to me, for it was Chinese; nor had I ever so much as heard of any relationship between bats and happiness, beyond the title of a work upon cricket, *Felix on the Bat*. As to whether an enamel was composed of 'pulverised gems' or not, there was a certain gorgeous fancy about the statement that threw the dissolved pearl of Cleopatra into the shade, and really deserved credit, if not belief—but that was a matter for the jewellers to decide upon; on the other hand, the question, as to whether it had the great Ming signet upon it, could only be settled by aid of a native interpreter. Thus it happened that the European jewellery ('presented at various times to the Chinese emperor') excited more interest than the Celestial wonders. There were objects literally encrusted with gems, and which seemed to have been manufactured rather to give the idea of lavish outlay than with any purpose. Imagine 'a beautiful telescope of the time of Louis XVI., enriched with pearls and enamels of fruit on a red ground, and wreaths of flowers in gold on a black ground, the object-glass cover being formed of a watch set

with pearls.' The glass was not a very scientific affair, and perhaps the watch was not what is vulgarly called 'a good one to go;' but what useless extravagance to place a watch in such a position! Similarly, there were 'gold waist-clasps' with watches in their centres, very convenient, doubtless, to passers-by, but to the wearers, unless of a very peculiar contour, quite unprofitable; they might just as well have worn them on the other side of the belt, and have thereby avoided the stigma, doubtless incurred from the wits of the period, of being always behind their time. A 'gold enamel box,' said to have been presented to the Brother of the Sun by Marie Antoinette, exhibited the same sort of extravagance; it was divided into three compartments, one being a musical-box, with an automaton mountebank; another a snuff-box; and the third a watch-case, with a medallion of the Petit Trianon. Underneath was a secret compartment opened by touching three small springs at a time. Could vain complexity and objectless extravagance any further go? The beautiful gold cage-temples in which the singing-birds fluttered and warbled with such exquisite naturalness, were, on the contrary, worthy of all admiration. I don't know what the proprietor expected he would get for *those* from this competitive examination of the pockets of the British public, but he set down in his catalogue 'a chalcedony cameo vase'—which, if I had bought, I should, in my ignorance, undoubtedly have used as a flower-pot—as 'superior to that of Ptolemy Philadelphus, valued at £40,000.' It was, however, I believe, knocked down, if I may use such an expression in speaking of an object at once so frail and costly, at considerably less than that sum.

There was nothing within my figure, among all the jewellery and precious stones, except one 'loose cat's-eye' (Lot 219), which I bid for from motives of humanity. And yet I would have bidden something for the Jade ornaments, if a genuine Chinaman would have pledged his pigtail to the truth of what was said about them in the catalogue. 'All grades of Celestials regard Jade (a substance found in the mountains of Tartary) as a heavenly gift, and when a fine specimen is discovered (a very rare occurrence), the emperor calls a council of artists to decide on how it can be most advantageously used. The artist who undertakes it *does so at the risk of his life*; if his work is unsatisfactory, he is decapitated. As, however, the material is so extremely hard that no important work can, with the utmost diligence, be finished in less than twenty years, the artist's head is in no immediate danger.' Under such circumstances, if I were a Celestial artist, I should let the Jade alone. But is all this true? I pause for a reply—in Chinese; and I don't get it. 'A Tazza, in antique gray Jade, with fantastic dragons,' bears an inscription, says the catalogue, indicating that 'it remained eight hundred years in the coffin of an emperor, and was then removed with appropriate ceremonies.' That would have to be translated to me by a trustworthy student of the Chinese tongue, before my natural reverence for antiquity could screw me up to bidding-pitch. 'The Goddess Fo. The rudeness of her workmanship and the antiquity of the Jade,' says the catalogue (and very pretty language it is to address to a lady and a divinity), 'which is beginning to lose colour through extreme age, attest to the great antiquity of this piece;' but, for my part, I want some more direct testimony. And again,

with respect to the inscription at the back of the 'White Jade cameo medallion,' that 'the penalty of death awaits any person who, on finding this treasure, does not return it to the emperor,' I require further corroborative evidence. I have seen a sentence very like it—which could scarcely have been a sentence of death—upon a chest of tea.

But the most surprising thing that was put up to auction at this sale, or, indeed, as I should imagine, at any other, was the small bottle supposed to contain 'essence of crocodile,' reputed to be 'the strongest stimulant in existence,' and of which there is but one other in the world, and that 'in the possession of the Sultan of Turkey.' The ownership of this without doubt confers the power of shedding crocodile's tears. No wonder, therefore, that its proprietor (who, let us hope, has himself no further use for it) set a fancy value upon the article. Count Bismarck would have given worlds for it when he found himself compelled, in opposition to the best feelings of his nature, to proclaim war against the Bund; or the inhabitants of our own Cave of Adullam might have clubbed together to secure this rarity, to evidence to their constituents at the next general election their regret at the postponement of a Reform Bill.

FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL.

MANY grand, noble, and solemn memories enthrone themselves upon mountain-heights. The poet, the artist, and the historian alike love, venerate, and immortalise many a mountain, which adds to its solitary dignity and mysterious grandeur the sublime interest of some great event in the supernatural or natural history of the human race. Ararat and Sinai, Hermon, Horeb, and Moriah are names which transport the mind by their mere sound into a world of infinite thought, wonder, and interest. Around Gerizim and Ebal, venerable and sacred associations cluster, dating from the earliest days of which any record is preserved. And away in the far past, beyond all such records, are the probabilities of the story of the sacred hills. Looking at their rugged sides and gray summits, and remembering that in all likelihood Gerizim and Ebal had been consecrated mountains, and had witnessed the performance of sacrifice and religious rites ages before Abraham and his grandson Jacob erected there their altars to Jehovah, the story of the ancient people, 'the oldest and smallest sect in the world,' whose dwelling-place is in the valley between them, whose lives are influenced by their traditions, as their homes are overshadowed by their majestic presence, acquires an extraordinary interest. There the present is a living illustration and explanation of the past; there the mind has not to travel through ages and gradations of history, to trace the fusion of races, the ravages of conquest, the removal of landmarks. All these are to be found on either hand; change and desolation spread widely around, and the glory of the past is but a sacred and solemn memory; but there, in the deep valley which lies between the holy hills, the past is not gainsaid by the present, the busy meddling of change has been stayed. 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and we worship,' said a woman of Samaria, nineteen centuries ago, to a wayfarer who questioned her, sitting by the brink of the well which Jacob had made for his flocks and his people, in the midst of a hostile people, who might have forbidden

him the use of the stream which still flows near the patriarch's well. A little while ago, an English traveller* sat on the same spot, probably upon the self-same stone, and Amram, the priest of the Samaritans, told him how their fathers had worshipped in this mountain, this gray old Gerizim, stretching away and aloft in the pure air, and under the hot, cloudless sky; and how they worship still, they, the sole inheritors of the promise, the true children of the Covenant, who alone hold whole and unbroken the law of Moses, and possess the authentic roll of the Pentateuch.

In this little valley of Shechem dwelt Melchizedek, the mysterious priest of the Most High, and officiated, under the venerable oak of Moreh, in the sacred rites which preceded by long centuries the ceremonial law of Moses. Here Abraham offered up his first sacrifice in the Promised Land, and duly paid his tithes to Melchizedek. On Gerizim, now proved to be the Moriah of Abraham, was that terrible and mysterious trial of the faith of the friend of God, the sacrifice of Isaac, applied, and triumphantly sustained. How must Moses have thought of all these things when he commanded that the children of Israel, when they should have crossed the Jordan, and entered upon the Promised Land, never to be trodden by his foot, should be halted between Gerizim and Ebal, in the valley of Shechem, to listen to the solemn proclamation of the Law. And when the triumphant claimants of the Covenant swarmed about the immemorial hills, they, and their children, and their cattle drank sweet water from the well which Jacob, the father of the people, had given them when the Captivity was yet undreamed of; and now, behold, it had passed away, and they had come to fill the land and to possess it. Such as it was then, it is now, and the Law, as there proclaimed, is kept now, the customs then observed are observed now, though the tale of the greatness of the children of Israel is told and ended, though another Captivity and another restoration, a bitterer and wider ruin, and long ages of dispersion, homelessness, contempt, and contumely, the rule of the pagan, the presence of the Christian in their Holy Places and in their God-governed city, have made the chosen people a mere tradition for the historian of the past, a mere problem for the curious in the future.

A little while, and the sect of the Samaritans will be no more—a little while, and this wonderful illustration of the past will no more make the dead and gone ages real to the traveller's gaze. They are yielding slowly, but surely, to the law which, however long of operation, inexorably fulfils itself. Jacob's well has been purchased by the Greek Church. No more may the women of Samaria set down their water-jars by the brink, and speak with strangers there. The purchase is not talked about at present, but the mouth of the well has been filled in, so that it may be deserted; and when the fitting time comes, a magnificent building, rich with gold and gems, barbarous in taste, and unmeaning in ornament, will utterly efface the old Hebrew tradition, while it will (far less effectively than by the simple venerable well) commemorate the introduction of Christianity into Samaria by the founder of Christianity himself. A divided, and even

* *Three Months' Residence at Nablus, and an Account of the Modern Samaritans.* By Rev. John Mills. London: John Murray.

antagonistic interest reigns in this wonderful spot for those who hasten to examine its landmarks while yet they endure, for here is the last stronghold of the faith of the patriarchs, still vital and active in the actual scene of the first mission inaugurated for its destruction. Sacred as the valley of Shechem is to the Samaritans, who still worship the God of Moses according to the law of Moses, it has a double sanctity in the eyes of Christians, incomprehensible to them.

The identity of Nablus, the dwelling-place of the last remnant of the sect of the Samaritans, with the ancient city of Shechem is indubitable. The pulpit-like projection on Gerizim, which overhangs the city, and from whence any man's voice might make itself heard by a great multitude without extraordinary effort, is an important piece of testimony, but the entire description otherwise coheres. There was the sacred oak, beneath which Jacob buried the idols of his father-in-law's household; and under whose branches Joshua set up the first of the great stones of the Law, as commanded by Moses. Hard by the sacred oak was the ancient Sanctuary of the Lord, for whose superior sanctity over that of the Temple at Jerusalem (a mushroom city, without rank or importance, until the merely modern times of King David), the Samaritans contended. Here, too, is that 'parcel of ground' which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver, wherein the wanderers laid the bones of Joseph, which they had brought up out of Egypt. To Mount Ebal belongs the sacred inheritance of the tomb of Joseph. If the time ever comes when its sublime solitude shall be invaded, and its secrets explored, what may it not reveal. 'We know,' says Mr Mills, 'that Joseph was embalmed in Egypt; and being the most important personage next to the king, there is no doubt that the usual appendages of royalty were placed with him in the coffin. If this is the real tomb—and there is every reason to believe it is—then underneath is the sarcophagus, and even the mummy of Joseph, just as they were when deposited by the conquerors.' The Mohammedan legend confirms the belief that when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he carried Joseph's bones with him into Canaan, and buried them by his ancestors; but it affirms that they had first been placed by the Egyptians in a marble coffin, and sunk in the Nile, in order to help the regular increase of the river, and deliver them from famine for the future.

It must be a sensation worth experiencing to look from the valley of Shechem over the slopes of Gerizim and of Ebal, as they recede gradually, and offer space for hundreds of thousands of auditors, and to try to picture to the imagination the spectacle of the reading of the Law. 'The ark is placed in the middle of the valley, with the "heads of the people" ranged on each side. The Levites of the one half of the tribes stood upon the lower spur of Gerizim to read the blessings, and the Levites of the other half stood upon the lower spur of Ebal to read the curses. The vast congregation filled the valley; and the women and children covered the sides of the mountain like locusts. The Levites on Mount Gerizim then read the blessings, and the Levites on Ebal read the curses, to which the vast assembly responded Amen! A congregation and a service, compared with which all other assemblies the world has ever witnessed dwindle into insigni-

ficance.' From ancient Shechem to the Nablus of to-day, what a wondrous survey of time, what a chronicle of change and immobility side by side with it! It was ancient in the days of Abraham, venerable when Jacob came by that way. It was the capital city of the conquered land, under Joshua, a Levitical town, and a city of refuge. It retained its pride of place while the Judges ruled in Israel; and though Abimelech destroyed it, it was rebuilt, and restored to all its former power. The modern magnificence and pride of Jerusalem did not humble Shechem, during the reigns of the first monarchs. Thither Rehoboam went to decide the question of his succession, and when the nation was divided into two kingdoms, it continued to be the capital.

The story of Shechem is to be read in living letters at Nablus. Along the foot of Ebal, long lines of camels pass to-day, carrying on the traffic between Jerusalem and Galilee as it was carried on thousands of years ago. Within the gates of Nablus, the ancient 'gate,' in which the 'elders' sat, are the lineal descendants of those who heard the Law read from Gerizim, and beheld the burial of Joseph. Unchanged in faith, in dress, in customs, the visitor to Nablus who sees the Samaritans, and studies their domestic life, has no need to exert his fancy in re-peopleing the scene with forms of the far past. He has but to look and see. The Christian and the Mohammedan population he may discard as accidents, and go up with priest and people to the feasts of the Passover and of the Full Moon, on Gerizim, ascending by the steps which were cut for the first worshippers among the heirs of the Covenant. The account the Samaritans give of their own origin differs from that of Josephus, and it is far more attractive to faith and fancy. They hold that they are the only pure and unmixed children of Israel, the sons of Joseph, who have dwelt, through all their past history, since the conquest, in the mountains of Ephraim; that the Jews, on the other hand, ever since the Captivity, are beyond all doubt a mixed people, and that they have tampered with the Book of Joshua, and falsified their whole history. 'In their own history and chronology, the Samaritans prove, to their own satisfaction, that they are the only true representatives of the Israelites who entered Palestine under Joshua; and that their priest's family can trace their genealogy in an unbroken chain up to Aaron, the first high-priest of the nation.'

No people have been more persecuted and oppressed from age to age than the Samaritans, but suffering has only knit them more closely together. The story of their days, whether good or evil, is coming to a close. The only remnant of them is to be found at Nablus, and it numbers but forty families. Upon this little community, there is a distinct impress of superiority to all around them. The nobility of an immemorial ancestry, and a pure and ancient faith, is theirs, investing them with physical beauty, lofty bearing, and a strong family resemblance. They have never been tainted by assimilation to any other race, and their strict system of intermarriage has preserved all their traits. To observe their domestic life, is to live in a biblical atmosphere, and to return to the days of the patriarchs. It is to find the birth of a male child rejoiced over, and that of a female regarded as a misfortune; to see the ceremonial law observed in its minutest particulars, its endless

ablutions and purifications, its strange penalties and disabilities; marriage, mourning, death, the confession to be made in the sacred (Hebrew) tongue, with the last conscious effort, that 'the Lord our God is one Lord,' the frequent reading of the Law, the intimate relation between all the details of life and the tenets of their faith, which makes the exactions of the Levitical law appear to us as burdens very grievous to be borne—these may all be seen, as in the most ancient of days. Their faith and their people are synonymous. That any one of their brethren could change his creed, and yet remain a Samaritan, is beyond their comprehension. They believe in the coming of the Messiah, not as a king, or a conqueror, but as a peacemaker, and the healer of nations; as the inferior of Moses, the greatest of all; as a mortal man, who is to fulfil his mission, and die. They look for his advent about 1910 of the Christian era. His coming is to be preceded by peculiar signs, but they are not permitted to be divulged to unbelievers.

The worship of the synagogue is preserved in its most ancient forms, the Law is read from the precious rolls, and the language is Hebrew. The Sabbath is observed with such extraordinary strictness, that the movement of the hands, and even the lighting of a lamp, is forbidden. *No manner of work may be done from the sunset of the eve of the Sabbath to the sunset of the day of rest.* No servant of another faith may be hired to do prohibited work; no action may be performed, even in the defence of property or life. Their fasts are as severe as their Sabbaths are strict. The tenth day of the seventh month, called Tishri, is kept as the great day of atonement, and is the most important in the Samaritan calendar. The fast begins at sunset, and lasts twenty-five hours. During this time, neither man, woman, nor child, not even the sick, or unweaned infants, are permitted to taste so much as a drop of water. In the most extreme case, no medicine would be administered. Half an hour before sunset, all the community assemble at the synagogue, and the repeating of the Pentateuch commences. This, interrupted by prayers, lasts all night, and goes on in solemn darkness. In the morning, the worshippers form in procession, and visit the tombs of the prophets; on their return at noon, to the synagogue, the service commences as before. With the approach of sunset, the great ceremony takes place—the exhibition of the precious roll of the Law, their glorious possession, which they declare to have been written at the door of the tabernacle, in the thirteenth year of the establishment of the children of Israel in the Holy Land, by Abishna, the great-grandson of Aaron. Into whose hands is this priceless treasure, which a few English travellers have seen, destined to fall, when this story of solemn, awful antiquity comes to a close?

For forty years (a suggestive period in connection with their history), the Samaritans were prevented by the Mohammedans, peculiarly violent and fanatical at Nablus; from celebrating the Passover on Mount Gerizim. Twenty years ago, Mr Finn, the English consul at Jerusalem, succeeded in getting their right restored to them; and in 1860, Mr Mills witnessed the celebration of the Paschal solemnities, as a sharer of the tent of Amram; a wonderful experience, never to be forgotten, and intensified in its effect by the fact

that he had just witnessed the Christian celebration of Easter at Jerusalem. What solemn feelings they must have been which arose within him, when, having ascended Mount Gerizim, he stood and gazed upon the scene around. Under his feet was the wall of the ruined temple of Samaria; on the left, the seven steps of Adam, out of Paradise; still a little southward, was the place of the offering of Isaac; westward was the rock of the Holy Place; northward, the stones set up by Joshua. Hard by was the Samaritan encampment, and in front the platform for the celebration of the sacred feast. How strangely the tide of time must have rolled back, for the spectator, for the educated Englishman, divided by the incalculable space of a dispensation in the history of humanity from the men he was observing, divided by the incalculable gulf of race, and faith, and knowledge from those who thus confounded the ages, in their simple adherence to their antique law! Europe must have been forgotten, and all the modern world, and ancient Egypt have unveiled her mighty, mystic face to the gaze of his fancy, as the camp of the children of Israel was pitched, and the men came forth, and slew the Paschal lambs, and roasted them, eating, in haste, with their loins girded, their staves in their hands, and their shoes upon their feet—the Lord's Passover.

ON THE TRAIL.

I AM a police superintendent in a large iron-making town, and for upwards of twenty years have had the care of a populous colliery district. The peculiar avocations of the people supply ample disguise for criminals in hiding. Who would look for a runaway clerk in the black face and coal-stained garments of a collier, or in the guise of a labourer in the iron shed? It may be assumed, therefore, that many a strange incident has come under my notice in the course of so long a service, and some of these I may occasionally present to the public. One in particular I remember well, as practically illustrating a remark made in the *Times* on the conviction of Müller, that crimes of a conspicuous character are generally committed by the class that is least suspected. I was called one evening to quell a disturbance between several colliers and a party of Irishmen. The colliers, it appears, maddened with drink, had assailed the latter, driven them into a dwelling, and would speedily have killed one or more, but for the opportune arrival of the police. The night afterwards, I received a note from the railway authorities that a coal-train had been thrown off the line by some miscreant or other, who had placed sleepers along the rails. Knowing that colliers working at a distance invariably returned by these trains, and remembering the struggle of the night before, I at once concluded this to be an attempt at Irish revenge, and pursued my investigation accordingly.

A few nights after, another coal-train was thrown off the rails, as, in the former case, however, without harm to the men; but this second attempt spurred me on, so that certain suspected persons were speedily in custody. But I soon found that these were not 'my men.' It is useless for me to expatiate on the unerring signs by which innocence invariably asserts itself. The Irishmen were violent men in their cups, but most certainly

incapable of the atrocious act of which they were accused.

Scarcely had a week passed when the whole neighbourhood was thrilled with horror. At a distance of twelve miles from the town where I live, there was another town, to which our tradesmen resorted in numbers every Wednesday to market. In the evening, the last train, as usual, bore its numerous passengers to their homes. It was summer-time, and merrily they dashed along the rugged bank of a mountain-river, winding in amongst the hills. But soon the picture was changed; turning a curve in full career, the engine left the rails, and cutting deeply into the embankment, rolled on its side, fortunately having continued just a sufficient time in progress to break the shock of the carriages. There was an awful cry of lamentation, a wild medley, a hurried scene; men and women seeking to clamber through the opening above the locked doors, too intent on personal safety to think of anything else. Most were bruised, and all were frightened. While messengers were despatched to the nearest station, others searched along the route for the cause of the mishap. It was soon found. The scene of the accident was a curve, and the rail nearest to the river had been forcibly removed. The miscreant—for it was soon seen that a villain's hand had been there—had fortunately been ignorant of mechanics. He had taken up the rail by the ravine—for I have omitted to mention that there was a steep precipice at this point—and naturally thought that the train, with its load of human life, would have tumbled over. The rail next to the river was the 'safe' one, and so the engine simply ploughed along towards the scarp of the mountain.

When the details of this lucky escape reached me, I felt that my reputation was at stake. This was evidently Number *Three* of the diabolical attempts of the same hand. The first inquiry made was: Who drove the train? and one or two questions of a similar character put me in possession of this important fact, that the driver of the train and the driver of the coal-engine trains at the time the trucks were thrown off, was one and the same person. 'Now, then, for the driver,' said I, and marched to his lodgings. I found him a quiet, inoffensive sort of young fellow, not a likely man to have a malignant enemy. He was unmarried, and somewhat fresh to his duties on the line, not having been in the position very long. We at once touched on the subject of the accident, but I found he was quite at sea as to the cause.

'Have you an enemy,' said I, 'or any one who entertains any malice against you?'

No; he thought not.

'You are unmarried, I believe?'

Yes; he was.

'Courting, perhaps?' I suggested.

He confessed to the soft impeachment.

'Have you any objection to tell me who the lady is?' inquired I, for we police-officers are sometimes obliged to override delicate scruples. He mentioned the name of a young woman residing at a farmhouse six miles down the valley, and within half a mile of the scene of the accident. I drew a long breath, but kept my own counsel.

'Oh, so the damsel lives there, does she? Now, has she any other sweethearts besides yourself?'

He thought there had been one, a carpenter; but, quoth the driver, complacently smoothing an incipient beard: 'She has no lover now but me.'

'Where does this carpenter live?'

'About half a mile from the farm,' he answered; and with that I left, fully satisfied now that I was on the trail.

The morning after, and at the scene of, the accident, I had found a large thick stake, cut evidently from the adjoining wood. This had been used to prize up the rail from the sleeper. Examining it minutely, I saw that it had been cut recently, and that with a *notched knife*.

So, with this idea uppermost, I started on the mission, and after a pleasant drive, reached the little hamlet where the carpenter lived. The district was very mountainous and rugged; and as I mounted the winding road towards the house, I could hear the monotone of the river near which so narrow an escape had taken place. *Yonder* was the scene. Was the criminal *here*? The door was soon opened to my knock, and by the carpenter himself, a cool, self-possessed young man, who seemed to read my errand in a moment, yet asked me what I wanted, without the change of a muscle. I entered into his little room, and told him I had a suspicion he could enlighten me on the cause of the railway accident.

No, he couldn't; he had heard of it, like the rest.

Would he allow me to search him?

Certainly; and forthwith various articles were in my hand. On his person, I found two pocket-knives, each of which would have served to cut the stake. As I paused a moment, and held them in my hand, he heedlessly observed: 'That knife' (pointing to one) 'I only put into my pocket this morning, as I generally keep it at home.' I opened the knife; the blade was *notched*; and looking up from the article to the carpenter, caught his eye. We knew one another's thought in an instant; but he accompanied me tranquilly enough to the town. At the trial, the knife figured in evidence; various corroborating matters satisfied the jury of his guilt: he was found guilty, and sentenced to seven years' transportation. It turned out afterwards that he loved the farm-girl, and was incited by jealousy to the act which so nearly caused so frightful an accident. For all I know, the driver still dwells in single blessedness, for the maid is still a maid, as rosy-cheeked as ever, and, it is said, is waiting for the carpenter's return!

THE DEAD FLOWER.

Is an old and musty volume, of strange and curious lore, A relic found I, dried and withered, of some happy days of yore.

By whose hand had it been placed there—why or wherefore, when or where?—

Of true love perhaps a token, stored away by maiden fair! Haply gathered from God's-acre, dear memento of a friend

Gone before, yet in the memory ever living to the end!

There it lay, its pristine beauty faded—gone; but to the eyes

Of the one who there concealed it, dearer than any prize! As I found it, so remains it, undisturbed, but not forgot. Ever sacred I preserve it, for it says: Forget-me-not!

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